

Message Text

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PAGE 01 BANGKO 28306 011040Z
ACTION HA-02

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C O N F I D E N T I A L BANGKOK 28306

LIMDIS/NOFORN

C O R R E C T E D C O P Y (TEXT PARA 5 LINE 7)

EO 11652: XGDS-1
TAGS: UNHCR, SREF, TH
SUBJ:

REF: BANGKOK 26571

1. BOTH UNHCR AND THAI OFFICERS HAVE INFORMED US OF A SECOND PRIVATE MEETING BETWEEN UNHCR HARTLING AND PRIME MINISTER KRIANGSAK ON SEPTEMBER 17, WHEN HARTLING WAS TRANSITING BANGKOK. HARTLING MET PRIVATELY AT KRIANGSAK'S HOME IMMEDIATELY AFTER KRIANGSAK'S HIGHLY PUBLICIZED BREAKFAST FOR RELEASED THAMMASAT 18 STUDENTS.

2. UNHCR OFFICERS TELL US THAT MEETING WENT VERY WELL, WITH KRIANGSAK ASSURING HARTLING OF HIS INTENTION TO MOVE CAUTIOUSLY TOWARDS SOME "JOINT DEVELOPMENT" EFFORTS INVOLVING BOTH THAI AND REFUGEES, THE LATTER ON A "TEMPORARY" BASIS. UNHCR OFFICERS SAID KRIANGSAK MADE CLEAR THAT WORDS "RESETTLEMENT" OR "LOCAL SETTLEMENT" WERE TABOO AND SHIED AWAY FROM ANY USE OF WORDS WHICH
CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 02 BANGKO 28306 011040Z

WOULD GIVE PUBLIC IMPRESSION THAT REFUGEES HAD BEEN ACCORDED PERMANENT STATUS. AT SAME TIME UNHCR OFFICERS SAID KRIANGSAK GAVE CLEAR IMPRESSION THAT "TEMPORARY" INVOLVEMENT OF THE REFUGEES IN THESE PROJECTS WOULD BE LONG TERM, INDEED SYNONYMOUS WITH PERMANENT SETTLEMENT.

3. KRIANGSAK ALSO TOLD HARTLING THAT HE WOULD PUT

DEPUTY INTERIOR MINISTER GENERAL PREM TINSULANON IN CHARGE OF PILOT PROJECTS IN THIS AREA AND THAT DR. KRASAE CHANAWONG, WHO IS SERVING AS INFORMAL INTER-MEDIARY FOR THE UNHCR WITH KRIANGSAK, WOULD BE ON THE COMMITTEE FORMED TO DEAL WITH THIS QUESTION. DR. KRASAE IS FORMER NEW FORCE PARTY LEADER AND CURRENTLY ADVISER TO THE PRIME MINISTER PARTICULARLY ON RURAL DEVELOPMENT.

4. THE UNHCR OFFICERS SAID HARTLING FELT MUCH BETTER AFTER THE MEETING AND THEY BELIEVE THAT KRIANGSAK HAS GIVEN THEM SUFFICIENT LEEWAY TO COME UP WITH SOME INITIAL LIMITED PROJECTS WITHIN THE TERMS HE OUTLINED, I.E., NO REFERENCE TO EITHER "RESETTLEMENT" OR PERMANENTLY CHANGING THE STATUS OF THE REFUGEES. AT SAME TIME UNHCR DID ACKNOWLEDGE THAT THEY HAVE NOT YET BEEN ABLE TO MOVE FORWARD WITH THE THAI OPERATING AGENCIES TO DISCUSS FURTHER THE TIME TO PROCEED.
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5. MFA OFFICERS HAVE GIVEN US A LESS UPBEAT DESCRIPTION OF THE MEETING. MFA OFFICER STATED THAT THE MEETING WITH HARTLING WAS ARRANGED TO SOFTEN THE TOUGH REACTION THE UNHCR GOT FROM INTERIOR MINISTER LEK, THE MOI AND THE NSC IN ATTEMPTS TO FOLLOW UP THE INITIAL SEPTEMBER 7 DISCUSSION WITH KRIANGSAK ON THE LOCAL SETTLEMENT ISSUES. THE PRIME MINISTER DID TELL HARTLING THAT PREM WOULD BE
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PAGE 03 BANGKO 28306 011040Z

IN CHARGE OF THE COMMITTEE CHARGED WITH LOOKING AT POSSIBLE PILOT PROJECTS. HOWEVER, MFA OFFICER ALSO NOTED WRONGLY THAT PREM IS ALREADY IN CHARGE AND HIS VIEWS ARE VERY CLOSE TO THOSE OF MOI OPERATING OFFICERS AND "VERY CONSERVATIVE".

6. COMMENT: WE ALSO ARE GETTING CONTINUED COMPLAINTS, PARTICULARLY FROM NSC STAFF WHO ARE PLAYING THE MAJOR POLICY ROLE, ABOUT RTG UNHAPPINESS WITH THE UNHCR ATTITUDE DURING HARTLING'S VISIT AND OF STRONG OPPOSITION TO UNHCR INVOLVEMENT IN ANY INITIAL PILOT PROJECT UNDER CONSIDERATION. FOR OUR PART, WE HAVE POINTED OUT THE NEED FOR RTG TO DEAL WITH THE UNHCR ON LOCAL SETTLEMENT AND THE CRUCIAL IMPORTANCE OF UNHCR ASSOCIATION WITH ANY SIGNIFICANT THAI LOCAL SETTLEMENT EFFORT. NSC AND MOI OFFICERS ACCEPT THIS POINT RELUCTANTLY BUT SO FAR, DESPITE THE PRIME MINISTER'S COMMENTS TO HARTLING, SEEM COMPLETELY NEGATIVE ON UNHCR INVOLVEMENT ON INITIAL SMALL PILOT PROJECTS, MOST SPECIFICALLY, ANY TO BE FUNDED UNDER THE VICE PRESIDENT'S OFFER. ABRAMOWITZ

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Message Attributes

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